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SUBJECT: ROQUEFORT REACTS TO US BEEF HORMONE SANCTION

REF: Paris 62

1. Reftel reports on Agriculture Minister Barnier's statement attacking revised USG sanctions in beef hormone case. In a more constructive response, the president of the Roquefort cheese-producing Midi-Pyrenees region is sending President-elect Obama a gift of the blue delicacy to commemorate his inauguration. Martin Malvy released a statement January 16 in which he decried a decision that "makes no sense" and asks the new administration to re-examine the decision "with greater care." In a letter attached to the statement, Malvy also highlights his belief that negotiations with the EU on the issue remain possible.

2. Following is an unofficial translation of the statement and letter:

Martin Malvy sends a carton of Roquefort cheese to Barack Obama

Martin Malvy, President of the Midi-Pyrenees Region, announced Friday January 16 that he has sent a carton of Roquefort cheese to the American President-elect Barack Obama as an inauguration gift.

"The inauguration of Barack Obama brings great hopes," said Martin Malvy, "particularly for better relations between the United States and Europe. In that context, the measure taken to triple customs duties on Roquefort cheese makes no sense. I have therefore sent this prestigious product of Midi-Pyrenees agriculture to President Barack Obama requesting that, beginning Tuesday, the new American administration reexamine the case with greater care."

End text of statement.

3. Begin text of letter:

Monsieur Barack Obama
President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20520
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Mr. President,

Several weeks ago I took the opportunity to send you my congratulations, noting how pleased we were with your election as President of the United States.

I am writing you today to ask your kind assistance to the economy of the Region for which I speak.

Your predecessor and his administration have just taken the decision to increase by 300% the import duties on Roquefort cheese in response to measures taken by the European Union to bar entry into

Europe of meat from cattle raised with hormones.

Roquefort is a cheese produced in France, more precisely in Aveyron, in the Midi-Pyrenees Region which I head.

It is a product that can be made in no other part of the world, as it must be manufactured to strict, specific, natural and very local standards. With the time and effort devoted by people whose livelihoods depend on it, it has become indispensable to the economy of this very rural part of France.

The Midi-Pyrenees Region is a pioneer in this sector and has worked for many years to ensure quality in the production of its agricultural products.

In addition, I consider that the decision taken by the United States is not fair. Roquefort cheese has become the unwilling hostage of international agreements on the import and export of agricultural products.

Mr. President, I wish to present you a Roquefort cheese on the occasion of your inauguration so that you might be able to appreciate it in all its quality, but above all to kindly request you to review that decision, and in the hope of being able to welcome you to our region during one of your visits to France and present you in detail the agro-food sector, of which Roquefort has been for generations one of the most emblematic products.

I remain confident that a discussion with Europe on the subject of your exportation is possible.

Please be assured, Mr. President, of my best wishes for you.

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Martin Malvy

End text.

STAPLETON